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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: NORTHERN POLITICAL TIDBITS FOR SEPT/OCT
2007

REF: A. ABUJA 1626
[1](#)B. ABUJA 1535

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[1](#)1. (U) This cable is a roundup of recent political
developments across northern Nigeria, including:

- Alleged Christian-Muslim Violence Erupts in Kano
- Sharia Court Bans Play Critical of Sharia Implementation
- Bauchi Governor Yuguda Probes Former Governor Mu'azu

KANO: MUSLIM YOUTH ATTACK CHRISTIANS, KILLING NINE

[1](#)2. (U) On September 29, violence erupted in the Tudun Wada
area of Kano state, 70 miles outside Kano metropolis after a
Christian teacher allegedly displayed an offensive caricature
of the Prophet Muhammad in his classroom. An altercation
ensued between Muslim and Christian youth, which eventually
dissipated following police intervention. Reportedly, nine
persons were killed and churches in Tudun Wada were razed in
the incident. Other reports alleged Muslims in Tudun Wada,
reacting against statements by the Christian Association of
Nigeria (CAN) decrying Christians who converted to Islam,
indiscriminately destroyed Christian homes and businesses in
the area.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Initially, Kano government representatives denied
the incident took place, but later claimed that a scuffle
with communal not/not religious overtones broke out between
unidentified groups. On October 2, Commissioner for
Information Haruna Dederi told PolOff the Kano Deputy
Governor Abdullahi Gwarzo visited Tudun Wada on September 29
to help calm tensions and restore order. Dederi believed the
media exaggerated the incident and speculated the ruling
People's Democratic Party (PDP), in its antipathy for
Governor Shekarau (of the All Nigeria People's Party - ANPP)
and in an attempt to "sabotage" his good name, were actively
"spreading rumors" (principal amongst them, Shekarau's
ill-treatment of Kano's minority Igbo and Yoruba Christians)
against his administration.

[1](#)4. (SBU) CAN promptly issued a statement condemning the
treatment of Christians in the North. In discussions with

PolOff on October 15, CAN-North Secretary Saidu Dogo claimed the incident was a "conspiracy" instigated by the Tudun Wada District Head and Divisional Police Officer, both of whom, Dogo observed, have been "unwilling" to thwart violence against Christians. Instead, Dogo argued, the police tacitly "permitted" the town's Muslim youth to attack Christians by not intervening in time. Dogo alleged 8 churches and the "entire Christian commercial center" of Tudun Wada had been destroyed by Muslim residents.

¶5. (SBU) Moreover, Dogo believes Governor Shekarau has long been complicit in fomenting hostility toward Kano's large Christian minority, stating "with a Muslim in power, the Christians do not feel at ease" and decrying Shekarau for policies perceived as inimical to the interests of Christians. Dogo maintained that Christians are inadequately represented in Shekarau's government, asserting that Christians in order to achieve positions of political prominence must "convert to Islam", or "flee to the Middle Belt" to secure employment. (Note: Under heavy pressure from inter-faith groups such as the nationally-known Bridge Builder's Association, Shekarau appointed two Christians to his cabinet in 2003 and used state funds to send Christians annually to pilgrimage in Jerusalem. End Note.) Dogo also opined that Muslims, as a result of feeling "threatened" by the rise of the Pentecostal movement in the North, particularly its "success" in converting significant segments of hitherto Muslim strongholds (i.e., Sokoto, Maiduguri, Kano), have begun lashing out at Christians.

¶6. (U) The GON, for its part, pledged to convene an inter-faith conference to address latent inter-religious discord in the North. (Note: The Nigerian Inter-Religious Council (NIREC), co-chaired by CAN President Archbishop John

Onaiyekan and Jamatu Nasril Islam (JNI) President Sultan Muhammadu Abubakar, was created under Obasanjo to address religious crises in Nigeria. As advisors to the GON, NIREC has been praised for bringing prominent Christian and Muslim leadership together and for aiding to diffuse religious tensions following riots over the past several years. NIREC is scheduled to meet October 17 to discuss the Tudun Wada incident. End Note.)

¶7. (SBU) BACKGROUND: The Tudun Wada area of Kano state is almost equally divided between Muslims and Christians. Sporadic disagreements, even violence have afflicted Tudun Wada for well over a decade highlighting palpable unease between indigenous residents (predominantly Muslim, both Hausa-Fulani and a smaller group called the Maguzawa) and settlers (mainly Christian, Igbo or Yoruba) who have come to populate and compete over scarce resources in areas of the North. To be sure, the surge in Pentecostal evangelism especially over the past two decades in Muslim-dominated areas of the North as well as confirmed reports of inequitable employment practices have stoked already thorny relations between Christians and Muslims. While Governor Shekarau is claiming to have re-established order in Tudun Wada, the media did not sensationalize the incident, and the police quickly restored peace in the area, such events can be seized upon for political-cum-religious ends. END BACKGROUND.

SHARIA COURT BANS PLAY CRITICAL OF SHARIA IMPLEMENTATION

¶8. (U) On October 9, the Kaduna Sharia court banned the sale, distribution, and staging of a play entitled The Phantom Crescent, which reproaches former governor of Zamfara state Ahmed Yerima (1999-2007), who championed the re-introduction of Sharia criminal law in the North in 2000, for politicizing the Sharia and employing Sharia criminal punishments solely against the poor. (Note: The implementation of Sharia criminal law across the 12 northern states has been criticized by human rights groups and certain Muslim scholars for failing to curb political corruption and improve governance, as Yerima had promised. End Note.)

¶9. (U) On September 16, Nigerian dailies reported former Bauchi governor Ahmadu Mu'azu (PDP) was facing investigation by Bauchi state authorities over his administration's management of state resources during his 1999-2007 tenure as governor. (In September 2006, Mu'azu's name appeared on the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) list of 31 governors under investigation for alleged corrupt practices, but he is not currently under investigation by the EFCC).

¶10. (SBU) The feud between Mu'azu and newly-elected Bauchi Governor Isa Yuguda goes back several years. Yuguda served as Minister of Aviation from 1999-2005, but was later forced out reportedly at the behest of Mu'azu. When Yuguda unveiled plans to contest for the governorship of Bauchi under the PDP, Mu'azu helped obstruct his nomination. Subsequently, Yuguda de-camped to the ANPP and won the governorship anyway.

¶11. (SBU) Mu'azu has since fallen on hard political times. He failed to capture the Senate seat for Bauchi-North and later attempted to position himself for a ministerial slot when Yar'Adua announced the ineligibility of former governors to such positions. A proponent of Obasanjo's third term bid, Mu'azu has been criticized, and likely marginalized for failing to "secure" his state's House of Assembly members' support of the third term amendment.

¶12. (SBU) When Yuguda arrived in office, he reportedly found the Bauchi state treasury empty and a state debt of 30 billion naira (USD 240 million). Reportedly, forces within the PDP moved against Mu'azu, eventually entreating Yuguda to indict him for misappropriation of funds. Yuguda initially requested an audit of the state's local governments' accounts, which revealed that 8 billion naira (USD 60 million) had been diverted for Mu'azu's private use, leading

him to indict many permanent secretaries from Mu'azu's administration.

¶13. (SBU) Yuguda is currently entertaining the prospect of returning to the PDP. (Note: Other northern politicians who left the PDP for the ANPP -- including some ANPP leaders, and to a lesser extent, the Action Congress (AC), are considering the same option. End Note.) The PDP withdrew its electoral tribunal petition challenging Yuguda's victory at the April 14 polls and have since, by and large, joined Yuguda's coalition government. No outstanding petitions challenging Yuguda's election remain in Bauchi.
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